

RETURN

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TO AN ORDER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, dated the 24th November, 1909, for a copy of all correspondence and papers, and any information possessed by the Government relating to the formation and work of the Secretariat decided upon by the Imperial Conference of 1907.

CHAS. MURPHY,
Secretary of State.

Canada.
Confidential.

From Lord Elgin to Lord Grey.

DOWNING STREET, September 21, 1907.

MY LORD,—I have to-day addressed to you a despatch marked 'Miscellaneous,' relating to the reorganization of the Colonial Office and the formation of a 'Dominions' Department and an Imperial Secretariat.

2. I have addressed despatches in identical terms to the governments of the other self-governing Dominions, and as they will not reach their destinations in Australia and New Zealand for some weeks, I have to request Your Lordship to arrange with your Ministers to be good enough to *refrain from giving publicity to the despatch for about three weeks after its receipt by you.*

3. I am addressing a similar despatch to the Governor of Newfoundland.

ELGIN.

Canada.
Miscellaneous.

DOWNING STREET, September 21, 1907.

MY LORD,—Since the Conference of Prime Ministers separated in May, I have had under my consideration the arrangements which would most suitably carry out the pledge which I gave at that Conference so to endeavour to arrange the work and the staff of the Colonial Office as to constitute a separate branch of that office for dealing with the business of the self-governing Colonies and to connect with it a permanent Secretary who, with such assistance as may be found to be necessary, will be specially charged with the duties, retrospective and prospective alike, imposed or contemplated by the periodical conferences.

Before the close of the late Session of Parliament I was able on the 22nd of August to make a brief statement in the House of Lords indicating the lines upon which those arrangements will be based, of which I enclose a copy, and I will now proceed to make some comments upon the scheme for the information of your Prime Minister and his colleagues.

2. The Resolution on the subject which was adopted at the late Conference was as follows:—

'That it is desirable to establish a system by which the several governments represented shall be kept informed during the periods between the

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Conferences in regard to matters which have been or may be subjects for discussion, by means of a permanent secretarial staff, charged, under the direction of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, with the duty of obtaining information for the use of the Conference, of attending to its resolutions, and of conducting correspondence on matters relating to its affairs.'

I indicated my views on the subject in the following terms:—

'I am prepared to say that we will endeavour, I think we shall succeed, to so separate the departments of this office that you will have in the office a distinct division dealing with the affairs of the responsibly governed colonies'; and again

'What we have in our minds to carry out, and hope to be able to carry out in the future, is that we should appoint a gentleman on our staff to be the Secretary for the Conference, not for one Conference only, but to continue the business as a member of the staff of the office and in a division of the office, as I said before, but that being his specific duty, thereby focussing all the business in the way which I think the members of the Conference in their various resolutions expressed the desire it should be.'

3. Your Minister are probably aware that the business of the Colonial Office has been arranged up to the present time mainly on geographical lines, though there is a General Department, to which certain matters common to all the Colonies are referred. This General Department I propose in future to strengthen and enlarge but otherwise to make the line of division in the office one of status rather than of geography, and to separate entirely the work of the self-governing Colonies from that of the Crown Colonies and Protectorates. The only exception will be in the case of those Crown Colonies and Protectorates in the Pacific and connected with South Africa whose interests are so closely related to those of the adjoining self-governing Colonies that the conduct of their business at this office must necessarily be entrusted to the same hands. The Colonial Office will therefore in future be divided into three branches or departments, one dealing with the self-governing Colonies, a second dealing with the Crown Colonies and Protectorates, and a third—the General Department.

4. The first of these three departments will be known as the Dominions Department, the term being used to differentiate the status of the self-governing provinces of the Empire from that of the Crown Colonies. All the business of every kind connected with the self-governing communities will be included in its scope, though certain matters of general routine must necessarily be shared with the General Department; and the staff of the Dominions Department will, with the exception mentioned above, be in no way concerned with the Crown Colonies.

All questions of emigration will be referred to this Department, and it will keep in close touch with the Commercial Intelligence Committee of the Board of Trade.

5. The Secretariat of the Imperial Conference will be linked to this Department, without being entirely merged in it. The Secretary will be a member of the Department, but he will also have his own special and separate duties; and he will have, as occasion requires, direct access to the Secretary of State. I suggest, as a matter of convenience, and also in order to emphasize his position, that on all matters of routine arising out of and connected with the Imperial Conference, the Secretary and the Colonial Ministries shall correspond directly with each other, the correspondence in all cases passing under flying seal between the Secretary of State and the Governor-General or Governor. I shall also be glad to learn to what extent your Ministers may desire to suggest that the High Commissioner or Agent-General in this country should act as an alternative channel of communication, as I am anxious to establish close and harmonious relations between them and the

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Secretariat. The Secretariat, either directly or through the Dominions Department, will be represented on, or closely allied to the Commercial Intelligence Committee.

6. The second department of the Colonial Office, which will be styled the Colonial or Crown Colonies Department, will deal with all the administrative and political work of the Crown Colonies and Protectorates which forms a great and growing charge; and the third, or General Department, will be also the Legal Department, and, in addition to the general routine business of the office, which is now transacted by it, and to all personal questions arising in the Crown Colonies, will deal with various matters common to all the Crown Colonies—such as currency, banking, postal and telegraph matters, education, medical and sanitary questions, pensions, patronage, and so forth. In connection more especially with this Department four standing committees will be established, viz., a Patronage and Promotions Committee, a Railway and Financial Committee, a Concessions Committee, and a Pensions Committee.

7. The permanent staff of the Colonial Office includes at the head of the office the Permanent Under-Secretary of State and four Assistant Under-Secretaries. The Permanent Under-Secretary of State will remain as now the permanent head of the whole office and the principal adviser of the Secretary of State. The four Assistant Under-Secretaries will be allotted as follows. Mr. Antrobus will take control of the Crown Colonies Department with its very heavy and important work. Mr. Cox will have control of the General Department; he will as a rule preside over the Standing Committees; and, as Legal Adviser, his services will, as now, be utilized in connexion with all the departments. The Dominions Department will be under the control of the Senior Assistant Under-Secretary, Mr. Lucas, and with him will be associated Mr. Just, the junior Assistant Under-Secretary, whom I have nominated to be Permanent Secretary to the Imperial Conference. Mr. Lucas's long experience of Colonial administration in this office is supplemented by special knowledge of emigration questions; and he will bring to bear upon his new duties many years' close study of Colonial history. Your Ministers need not be reminded that Mr. Just was one of the Joint Secretaries to the late Conference; he has served in the Colonial Office since 1878, acted as Assistant Secretary to the first Colonial Conference in 1887, and has had personal experience of South Africa. He is, in my opinion, well qualified for the important post to which I have appointed him, and I am confident that on his part and on the part of those who will assist him every effort will be made to carry out the work of the Secretariat with efficiency and success.

8. Such is an outline of my proposals for re-arranging the work of the Colonial Office. They are made in the strong desire to promote the interests of all parts of the Empire, and to produce efficient and sympathetic treatment of the manifold questions that arise. I ask for, and I am confident that I shall receive, cordial co-operation from all concerned.

ELGIN.

Enclosure.

'Hansard,' Vol. CLXXXI., pp. 1067-1071.

BUSINESS OF SELF-GOVERNING COLONIES.

THE EARL OF JERSEY: I desire to ask the noble Earl the Secretary of State for the Colonies the Question which appears in my name, viz.:—

'If he is in a position to communicate to the House the steps for the better ordering of the business of the Self-Governing Colonies, and of the Imperial Conferences which at the recent Conference he stated to be in contemplation.'

In asking this question, I will only say that at the recent Conference a strong desire was expressed that there should be some re-arrangement at the Colonial Office

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which would enable that office to be in closer touch with the Self-Governing Colonies, and also to provide for the work of the Imperial Conferences. That matter was left with the noble Earl, the Secretary of State. It could not be left in better hands.

The SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES (The Earl of Elgin): I need not say that I shall be as succinct as possible at this hour of the night. But, as the noble Earl has said, this is a matter which has attracted a good deal of attention, not only in this country, but also in the Colonies, and I should like, as I am now able to do, to give some explanation as to the steps which we propose to take. The first resolution which was adopted by the late Conference had in it a passage which I desire to quote. It said—

‘That it is desirable to establish a system by which the several Governments represented shall be kept informed during the periods between the Conferences in regard to matters which have been or may be subjects for discussion, by means of a permanent secretarial staff, charged, under the direction of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, with the duty of obtaining information for the use of the Conference, of attending to its resolutions, and of conducting correspondence on matters relating to its affairs.’

This proposal was submitted by myself on behalf of His Majesty’s Government, and therefore what I have to do is to say how I propose to redeem the promise which I then gave. It will be remembered that there were other proposals before the Conference on this subject. There were resolutions which had been prepared by the Colonies of Australia and New Zealand and the Cape, and the propositions embodied in them were supported by the representatives of those Colonies at the Conference. They suggested the appointment of a secretariat, independent of the Colonial Office, by the Conference itself. To that arrangement His Majesty’s Government took exception on the ground that it was entirely inconsistent with the Ministerial responsibility which exists, not only in this country, but also in each and every colony which enjoys self-government, and we were supported in that view by several members of the Conference, and especially by the Prime Minister of Canada Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Sir Wilfrid Laurier speaks with so much authority and distinctness that I desire to give his opinion in his own words. Sir Wilfrid Laurier said—

‘I am quite satisfied upon the principle conceded, that what is done is to be done on direct responsibility. That is the only subject, as originally proposed, to which I demurred, because it seemed to be the creation of an independent body. The moment it is recognized here that it is to be under direct responsibility, I am satisfied. I am quite prepared to accept the new principle, but I would not like to commit myself immediately to the drafting of the resolution, which perhaps may be improved.’

Now, my Lords, I cannot refer to any division list—we fortunately did not take many formal divisions at the Conference—but the fact remains that though the representatives of the Colonies to which I have referred supported their own propositions, the resolution which I have quoted was finally adopted without a dissentient voice. I am obliged, however, to trouble the House with another quotation, because the concise language of the resolution itself might otherwise not be so clearly understood. In the course of the discussion I endeavoured to remove, so far as I could, any ambiguity as to the intentions of His Majesty’s Government. On the first day I defined our position as follows. I said—

‘If you accept our proposition that we should with Ministerial responsibility provide the link which you desire, and which we think you reasonably desire, between Conference and Conference, you should allow us a free hand in other respects. . . . The proposition which I put forward I put forward on my own responsibility as Secretary of State for the Colonies, but with the assent of my colleagues, and I hope therefore that the Conference will give it at

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least as favourable consideration as possible. . . . We will endeavour, I think we shall succeed, to so separate the departments of this office that you will have in the office in the form which we shall present it to you, a distinct division dealing with the affairs of the responsible governed Colonies. I will not say it will be exactly apart, because there is, and must be, at the head, at any rate, a connecting link between the several parts of any office, but there will be one division which you will feel will be concerned with the business of all the self-governing Colonies, and not directly with that of the Crown Colonies.'

On the second day I found it necessary to add a further explanation, and I said—

'What we have in our minds to carry out and hope to be able to carry out in the future, is that we should appoint a gentleman on our staff to be the secretary for the Conference, not for one Conference only, but to continue the business as a member of the staff of the office and in a division of the office, as I said before, but that being his specific duty, thereby focussing all the business in the way which I think the members of the Conference in their various Resolutions expressed the desire it should be. That is what we hope to do, and that is the reason we use the expression 'secretarial staff.' You quite understand, I think, that we can make that arrangement without interfering with the responsibility or organization of the office, but still in such a manner, I think, so far as it is capable of being done within the walls of the office, as to meet the wishes that the other members of the Conference have expressed. That is the meaning of the expression.'

Upon that Sir Wilfrid Laurier remarked—

'I do not care how it is expressed, so long as it is on Ministerial responsibility, that is the only thing I attach importance to.'

I think, therefore, my Lords, I have made it quite clear that the idea of an independent body was not entertained by the Conference, and in the second place that the idea of a scheme within the walls and under the responsibility of the Colonial Office was fully before the Conference and was entertained. That being so, the only scheme which I can be expected to lay before your Lordships this evening is one on those lines. I shall not detain the House by any description of the organization of the Colonial Office as it is now. It may suffice to say that geographical divisions into which it was, I think, originally divided have become somewhat obscured by the gradual accretions of spheres of duty in many parts of the world, and it is not very easy now to define any very distinct principle on which it is organized. The work generally, however, is divided into four Departments under four assistant Under-Secretaries of State, above them standing the permanent Under-Secretary as the head of the Office, and a link between them and the Secretary of State. I hope that will be sufficient in order to make the change we now propose to introduce intelligible to your Lordships. What we propose to do is to divide the office into three Departments instead of into four, The first of these Departments we propose to term the Dominions Department. It will deal exclusively or practically so with the self-governing Dominions beyond the seas. The only work outside the business of those Dominions would be that originating in certain Protectorates or possessions which are geographically or otherwise connected with the Dominions. I may mention as instances in point, at this present moment, the Protectorates in South Africa under the charge of the High Commissioner, and the islands of the Pacific. The other Departments do not, of course, come directly under the question of the noble Lord, and so I shall not deal with them in any detail, but I may mention that we propose to term the second Department the Colonial Department. It will, of course, deal with the Crown Colonies, and it will be a very heavy Department on

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account of the immense amount of administrative work and control involved in the management of the many Crown Colonies and Possessions of the Crown, and the ever-increasing importance and value that attaches to them. The third Department will be called the General Department. It will deal with the legal, financial, and other general business of the Office, and I may mention that under this Department we propose to establish a new feature in the shape of certain Standing Committees to take a collective view of such matters as contracts, concessions, mineral and other leases which come to us from all parts of the world, and also the matter of patronage, which is one of considerable importance and delicacy in the Colonial Office. This is the arrangement of the business of the Office which we propose to introduce, stated in general terms. I shall not trouble the House with any details, but I will just simply say, to prevent any misunderstanding, that we are not only dealing with the superior officers, but we are working out a reorganization throughout with all the necessary divisions and sub-divisions.

I proceed to the other branch of the subject, which is the personnel, and I propose to place at the head of the Dominions Department the senior assistant Under-Secretary of State. Mr. Lucas is a gentleman of very high academical and literary distinction, who has managed, even amongst the preoccupations of his official duties, to find time for works of merit on Colonial and especially on Canadian history. He has had a long experience of Colonial administration and his attractive and sympathetic personality has made him many friends in every quarter. I am certain that the task of recommending this new Department to our brethren beyond the seas can safely be entrusted to him. Second to this appointment and probably one which will attract even more interest is the nomination of the Secretary to the Conference. I have already quoted what I said to the Conference in regard to this matter. My promise was to take from our own staff a gentleman for the special duties arising out of the work of the Conference connected with what had passed and leading up to the future. I say at once that this post ought to be filled by a man of proved ability, of wide experience, and of a standing which will justify him in having access, whenever necessary, direct to the Secretary of State. I am glad to say that I can secure at once continuity from Conference to Conference. I feel that I am able to promote to this new post the gentleman who occupied the position of Joint-Secretary to the late Conference. Mr. Just has an experience of Colonial affairs which is second to none, and a special knowledge of South African business, having visited the country himself when the Secretary of State of the time paid a visit to it. He has an unsurpassed capacity for work, and the Papers which he presented for the last Conference were never mentioned without its members expressing their appreciation. He holds the rank of Assistant Under-Secretary, and I claim that in appointing him to this post I am appointing a man of experience, of merit, and of position which ought to secure for it the esteem which its best friends desire. I will not go further to-night; I will not mention other members of the staff by name, but I will only just observe that I feel I shall be able to find men in our service who have visited the self-governing Colonies, and I shall be only too glad to profit by their experience.

I think it right to make one remark as to a very unfair prejudice which is sometimes excited by semi-contemptuous references to Colonial Office Clerks. That is an expression calculated to mislead, but I am sure it will not mislead in this House. It is well known by all who care to know that the higher ranks in the Public Service of this country are filled by members of the great Civil Service of which this country is proud, and from which the requirements of India, as well as of England, are met by the same examinations and from the same lists. The gentlemen in the Colonial Office have passed the severest educational tests, many of them possess university distinctions, and they are men who have ungrudgingly devoted the best years of their life to work which no doubt has moments of great interest and excitement, but

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which is, after all, apt to be monotonous and is certainly arduous, unceasing and responsible beyond that of most men. I would only remark that that career is open to all subjects of His Majesty, and is open to our brethren beyond the seas if they choose to qualify themselves for it, and as I ventured to say in the Conference, possibly under the influence of the Rhodes Scholarships more Colonials will enter our ranks. We shall be only too happy to give them a welcome. I would only say just one word in conclusion. I have pointed out that it was the decision of the Conference itself which limited me definitely to the line of advance which I have pursued. I maintain that I have carried out my mandate fully and without reserve, and though I am not without sympathy with those who think that there are more advanced posts that might be occupied at some future time, I venture to say that we have at the present moment taken possession of the most advanced post which we can safely occupy. After all, representative institutions are the truest defences of our liberties, and we must make the machinery of government conform to the requirements of the representative institutions which we possess. I think I have now given the noble Lord all the information which at this time to-night it is reasonable to inflict upon the House.

THE EARL OF JERSEY: I think the statement the noble Earl has just made clearly shows that he carried out what seems to have been the undersanding, judging by the Blue-book, at the recent Conference. I believe also his decision to have a Dominions Department for the self-governing Colonies will be received with great satisfaction in other parts of the Empire. I was also glad to hear him say a word on behalf of the staff of the Colonial Office. It is true that sometimes criticisms are passed on the staffs, but, after all, criticisms are passed on the very best of staffs, and they no doubt sometimes arise because people do not get exactly what they want. Those who have had the opportunity of dealing with the Colonial Office, whether as regards the Chief or those who serve under him, will say that they have always met there with the greatest ability and also the greatest courtesy, and I trust in the Dominions of the Crown the same satisfaction will be felt as I feel with the remarks which the noble Earl has made with regard to his decision in the re-arrangements of his office.

Cable.

Lord Elgin to Lord Grey.

LONDON, October 25, 1907.

My confidential despatch of 21st September, respecting Colonial Office reorganization will not be published before 12th November here, when it will have reached New Zealand.

Your Ministers will oblige me if they do not publish it before that date.

ELGIN.

From Lord Crewe to Lord Grey.

DOWNING STREET, May 15, 1908.

MY LORD,—I shall be glad to learn whether your Excellency's Ministers wish to offer any observations on my predecessor's despatch Miscellaneous of the 21st September last, on the subject of the reorganization of the Colonial Office.

2. Replies have now come from all the self-governing dominions except Canada and New Zealand and if your Ministers have any comments to make on the despatch I shall be glad to receive them.

CREWE.

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From Lord Crewe to Lord Grey.

DOWNING STREET, August 18, 1908.

MY LORD,—I have the honour to refer to my despatch No. 262 of the 15th May, and to request you to inform your Ministers that if they desire to make any comments on Lord Elgin's despatch of the 21st September last on the subject of the re-organization of the Colonial Office, I shall be glad to receive them as soon as may be convenient.

CREWE.

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